

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic DAWSON BROTHERS PLANT
and/or common

2. Location

street & number s.e. corner N. Halsted and W. Ohio streets: 517-519 N. Halsted Street
N/A not for publication
city, town Chicago N/A vicinity of
state Illinois code 012 county Cook code 031

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant/industrial

4. Owner of Property

name Kenard Corporation
street & number 4242 N. Sheridan Road
city, town Chicago _____ vicinity of state Illinois

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds/ Cook County Courthouse
street & number 118 N. Clark Street
city, town Chicago state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Illinois Historic Structures Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1972 federal state county local
depository for survey records Illinois Department of Conservation: Historic Sites Division
city, town Springfield state Illinois

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Constructed between 1888 and 1901 the Dawson Brothers mantel and fireplace grate factory consists of three connecting brick buildings with heavy-timber, mill-type, structures. The handsome facade of the five-story 1888 building, designed by Chicago architect Julius Zittel, fronts on N. Halsted Street, approximately one mile northwest of Chicago's downtown. The main facade, built of brick, incorporates a cast-iron front on the ground story and areas of rock-faced stone embellishments. Corner piers and the two front brick piers impart vertical emphasis and divide the facade into three visually distinct bays. Each bay has a separate entrance and an expansive area of glass framed by the ornamented cast iron front. Three sets of three arched windows cross the facade at the second floor level and are repeated at the fifth floor level. Stone keystone and recessed brick courses highlight the arched window openings. Three sets of three rectangular windows cross the facade on both the third and fourth floors. Recessed brick courses and unusual brick corbels at the cornice further distinguish the street elevation. The facade's window pane configuration is six-over-six and four-over-six. The side and rear wall of the 1888 building are of common unadorned brickwork. The expressive, slightly arched, window openings 9 feet by 8 feet, containing pairs of two double hung windows (nine-over-nine panes) dominate the side wall. Six vertical tiers of windows separated by brick piers cross the primary north facade.

The common brick unadorned character of the sides of the 1888 building are also evident in the design of the 1890s three-story addition located on the back alley and in the six-story 1901 addition designed by Chicago architect Harold M. Hansen, fronting on Ohio Street. Here the undivided walls are dominated by regular tiers of rectangular window openings with twelve-over-twelve pane configurations.

After 1901 the plant's industrial layout located the fireplace grate metal working operations -- the iron brass foundry, machine shop, polishing and plating shops -- in the upper floors of the 1888 building. Wood working machinery for producing the mantels filled the three-story rear addition. The 1901 six-story building housed primarily storage, packing, and shipping rooms. Office and showroom space occupied the ground story of the 1888 building. There is no extant machinery or evidence of the Dawson Brothers industrial process on the interior of the building.

The general condition of the building and its additions is good. There have been no intrusive additions or structural alterations made. Although several windows are missing their original glass, the character and pane configurations are clearly evident and help define the industrial nature of the building. The only major area of intrusive alteration to the building is the coat of white paint which covers the brick. The brick pattern remains evident; however, the distinction between the areas of finished and common brick, stone, and cast iron is muted by the uniform coat of paint. Despite the paint the building's age, use, and design quality is manifest.

A contemplated building rehabilitation anticipates the removal of the paint and the restoration of the exterior brickwork.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1888-1901

Builder/Architect Julius Zittel; Harold M. Hansen

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SUMMARY STATEMENT

In the strength and character of its design the Dawson Brothers factory evidences a deft response to the aesthetic and utilitarian requirements of a nineteenth-century industrial building which continued to accommodate manufacturing, office, and showroom display space. Built in 1888 the five-story structure housed the entire mantel and ornamental grate manufacturing business of Henry G. and William R. Dawson. Located adjacent to Chicago's downtown, which was drawing growing numbers of office, sales, and white collar workers into specialized skyscrapers and office buildings, separated from manufacturing and warehouse operations, the Dawson Brothers building adhered to a more traditional pattern of business and architectural design. In a design for a building which would draw customers to its showrooms, business partners to its offices, and in all likelihood be associated with the quality of the product and the character of the proprietors, the canons of severe utilitarian design were eschewed. Manufacturing a product which involved questions of aesthetic discrimination and taste the Dawson Brothers facade design offered an elegant work of tasteful, dignified, architecture. The ground story's extremely open glass and cast iron front harmonized with the storefronts of the mixed commercial, industrial, and residential neighborhood it occupied. The inviting openness of the cast iron front suggested, and provided a glimpse of, Dawson's first story offices and showroom. The side walls, built of common brick, are given over to large expanses of window meeting the utilitarian requirement for interior light.

The Dawson Brothers building's primary area of National Register significance is architecture. Embodying "the distinctive characteristics of a type" -- the nineteenth-century Chicago loft industrial building which due to its mixed business character evidenced a concern with architectural and company images as well as with economy and efficiency -- the building meets National Register Criteria C. In relation to surviving nineteenth-century industrial designs the Dawson Brothers also possesses the "high artistic value" encompassed by Criteria C level significance. In the older industrial sections of Chicago very few cast-iron front industrial buildings survive. The Dawson Brothers building's outstanding feature is its ability to convey a sense of the earlier form of business organization (everything under one roof) and its attendant influence on architectural design. In terms of both style and function the Dawson Brothers building embodies a type of popular middle and late nineteenth-century industrial building which was generally eclipsed in the face of more specialized modern urban patterns and building types.

DAWSON BROTHERS AND VICTORIAN DOMESTICITY

In the late 1870s Henry G. and William R. Dawson started working rather modestly in Chicago as metal grinders, polishers, and finishers. In the mid-1880s they founded Dawson Brothers and started manufacturing ornamental fireplace grates and mantel trimmings. The decision to build their five-story factory closely coincided with the expansion of their metal working and foundry operation to include woodworking shops and the production of

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full mantel pieces and fireplace grates.

Despite the technical advances in systems of central heating the fireplace hearth remained a central interior feature of the American Victorian middle-class home. Practically the fireplace, with coal or wood grates or gas fixtures, did provide an important source of heat in many homes. However, the fireplace and hearth in the late nineteenth-century increasingly assumed a sentimental and expressive purpose. It connoted family virtue and domesticity and stood in sharp contrast to modern business and social life. Elaborately ornamented wood mantels enhanced the symbolic import of the hearth and home, and became a crucial piece of interior woodwork. In June, 1896 the National Builder reported: "No house in these days is considered complete if it does not contain one open fireplace, with all the paraphernalia of basket grates, ornamental fender, tile hearth and tile facings and jambs, and surrounded with a handsomely carved, much mirrored mantel. The fashion of having fireplaces and grates is one of those customs which has come to stay, . . . it is in the interest of architect, contractor and workman to encourage all things that mak[e] the work effective in its own sphere, and ornamental enough to be attractive [and] in good taste." The Dawson Brothers business benefited from the pervasiveness of this philosophy. The business expanded on the site and operated into the 1920s.

ARCHITECTURE AND PROMOTION

The design, purchase, and installation of mantels in late-nineteenth-century homes obviously involved questions of "custom," "fashion," and "good taste." Unlike some major Chicago furniture manufacturers, like A.H. Andrews & Company, which maintained downtown showrooms and offices apart from outlying factory buildings, the Dawson Brothers declined to separate their office, showroom and manufacturing facilities. They had, after all, entered business as skilled craftsmen; in their working life as in their building, business operations were integrated. The fact that the factory served as both the figurative and literal showplace for the Dawson Brothers' mantels and grates undoubtedly influenced the decision to commission architect Julius Zittel to design an aesthetically pleasing front for the building.

The Dawson building facade incorporated brick, rock-faced masonry, and a ground-story cast-iron front. The cast-iron front was divided into three main 19 foot wide bays which incorporated extensive areas of glass, over twelve feet high. The glass flooded interior showrooms with light and gave them good exposure to the street. The series of arcaded windows on the second and fifth floor, the patterned stringcourses, and the unusual heavy brick corbels at the cornice all enhanced the building's distinctive design. The facade initiated an atmosphere of quality which would hopefully extend to the mantels and grates manufactured and displayed inside.

RELATED BUILDINGS

The Dawson Brothers factory shares the characteristic of combined architectural distinction and product promotion with a fairly limited number of other Chicago industrial buildings. All the major Chicago industrial buildings listed individually

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on the National Register are characterized by distinctive architectural design, self-consciously arrived at to promote business; such an effort can be seen in Schmidt, Garden's Schoenhofen Brewery, Howard Van Doren Shaw's Donnelley Press, and John Ahlschlager's Schulze Baking Company. Another characteristic of the few industrial buildings on the Register is that they date from the early twentieth century. Carl Sandburg's "Chicago," industrial Chicago, ("Hog Butcher for the World, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with the Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler; Stormy, husky, brawling, City of the Big Shoulders:" has received relatively little recognition from the National Register listings.

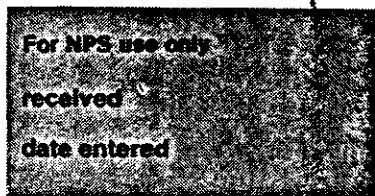
The industrial South Loop Printing House Row District is largely made up of twentieth-century buildings. In this District only the Duplicator Building, 1886; Franklin Building, 1888; and the Dowe Building, 1892; evidence the combination of cast iron and brick materials which distinguishes the Dawson Brothers Building. It is indeed the cast-iron front that most prominently gives these buildings their sense of time and place. Cast iron architecture enjoyed its greatest popularity between 1850 and 1870. Entire commercial blocks in pre-Fire Chicago were faced with cast iron. The failure of the cast-iron to resist fire contributed to its eventual eclipse and Chicago's commercial and industrial buildings after the 1870 Fire tended to rely primarily upon brick and stone. Thus the combination of cast iron, stone, and brick in buildings is relatively uncommon in Chicago's nineteenth-century building stock. Their numbers also declined precipitously in the face of modern highway and urban renewal land clearance projects which substantially affected the older industrial sections of Chicago's near North and West sides. In fact, the Dawson Brothers plant dominates its immediate neighborhood, in part, because of the demolition engendered by the adjacent highway development and surrounding tracts of vacant land. The Dawson Brothers building compares very favorably in terms of style and integrity with the other surviving examples of major cast iron and brick factory/warehouse buildings: Fulton Street Wholesale Marketing Company, 832-854 W. Fulton, 1887; and three loft buildings built to house numerous manufacturing concerns within single structures: 900-912 W. Lake, 1889; 208-222 N. Clinton, 1887; 214-216 S. Jefferson, 1889.

Since Dawson Brothers controlled land immediately north of its original building it was able to meet the demand for interior natural light more effectively than nearly all of the related buildings mentioned above. The demand for natural light helped determine the evolution of the Chicago window, the projecting tiers of bay windows, and the extensive interior lightcourts which characterized early Chicago skyscrapers. Concurrently industrial designs in the late nineteenth century incorporated greater expanses of window openings. The north and east sides of the Dawson building eschewed the careful articulation of the front facade in favor of an overriding concern with interior lighting. The double sets of nine-over-nine pane, double hung, windows occupy bays nine feet high and nearly eight feet wide. The bays are separated by four foot-four inch piers; thus the side walls are dominated by the window openings.

The successful provision of natural light underscores the alternating quality of the Dawson Brothers building. The front facade evidences a concern with aesthetic architectural expression and business promotion while the side walls and windows reveal a concern with utility, efficiency, and business economy. The contrast is also

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evident in comparing the 1888 building with the 1890s three-story addition at the rear of the building and the 1901 six-story addition fronting on Ohio Street. The 1901 addition designed by Chicago architect Harold M. Hansen, served as a storage, packing, and shipping building. On a less prominent part of the site, excluding any office or showroom space, the 1901 building lacks the artful conception of the main facade; its twelve-over-twelve pane windows dominate the walls. These additions to the Dawson plant represent, within the building itself, the broader contrast between elements of utility and art in Chicago industrial design. The distinctive combination of utility in the side window-walls and the artfulness of the facade design makes the Dawson Brothers Building stand out among the limited number of smaller-scale, less-specialized, Chicago industrial buildings still extant from the nineteenth century.

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Wood Mantels," National Builder, 20 (January 1896): 18; "Chimneys and Fireplaces," National Builder, 20 (June 1896): 158; Chicago Tribune, 8 January 1888; City of Chicago, Department of Inspectional Services, Building Permit Files and Ledgers.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property LESS THAN 1

Quadrangle name Chicago Loop Quad

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	4	4	6	3	0	0	4	6	3	7	7	6	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

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D

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification Lots 1-5, 11, 12 N₂ of lot 13 of Subdivision of lots 9 & 10 in Block 75 of Russell, Mather & Robert's Addition to Chicago in Sec. 9-39-14. Ante-Fire, Recorded 22 July 1835.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Daniel M. Bluestone

organization [University of Chicago] date 5.X.1984

street & number 5475 Ridgewood Court telephone (312) 752-3437

city or town Chicago state Illinois

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature William G. Barron

title date 1/3/85

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

FEB 22 1985

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to inform you that the following properties have been entered in the National Register of Historic Places beginning February 10, 1985 and ending February 16, 1985. For further information call (202) 343-9552.

STATE, County, Vicinity, Property, Address, (Date Listed)

- ALABAMA, Limestone County, Athens, Athens State College Historic District, 202-212 and 311 N. Beaty St., central campus area roughly bounded by Beaty, Pryor and Hobbs Sts. (02/14/85)
ALABAMA, Mobile County, St. Elmo, Bishop Manor Estate, Argyl Rd. (02/14/85)
ALABAMA, Walker County, Jasper, First United Methodist Church, 1800 3rd. Ave. (02/14/85)
- CALIFORNIA, El Dorado County, Placerville, Combella-Blair House, 3059 Cedar Ravine (02/14/85)
- COLORADO, La Plata County, Durango vicinity, Durango Rock Shelters Archeology Site, (02/11/85)
- ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Burlingham Building, 104 W. Oak St. (02/14/85)
ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Dawson Brothers Plant, 517-519 N. Halsted St. (02/14/85)
ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Hermitage Apartments (4606 North Hermitage Avenue), 4606 N. Hermitage Ave. (02/14/85)
ILLINOIS, Kane County, Elgin, Elgin Milk Condensing Co./Illinois Condensing Co., Brook and Water Sts. (02/14/85)
ILLINOIS, Ogle County, Byron, Soldier's Monument, Chestnut and 2nd Sts. (02/14/85)
ILLINOIS, Sangamon County, Springfield, Price/Wheeler House, 618 S. 7th St. (02/14/85)
- LOUISIANA, Madison Parish, Tallulah vicinity, Shirley Field, Off U.S. 80 (02/14/85)
- MAINE, Cumberland County, Falmouth, Purington, Elisha, House, 71 Mast Rd. (02/14/85)
MAINE, Hancock County, Seal Harbor, Seal Harbor Congregational Church, ME 3 (02/14/85)
MAINE, Piscataquis County, Brownville, Brown House, High St. (02/14/85)
MAINE, Sagadahoc County, Phippsburg, Cold Spring Farm, Off Fiddler's Reach Rd. (02/14/85)
MAINE, York County, Newfield, Newfield (Willowbrook) Historic District, Elm St. (02/14/85)
- MARYLAND, Queens Ann's County, Centreville, Ozmon, Capt. John H., Store, Centreville Wharf (02/14/85)
- MICHIGAN, Ionia County, Ionia vicinity, Sessions Schoolhouse, Riverside Dr. (02/11/85)
MICHIGAN, Wayne County, Detroit, Fox Theater Building, 2111 Woodward (02/14/85)
- MISSISSIPPI, Leflore County, Greenwood, Four Corners Historic District, Washington and Henderson Sts. (02/14/85)
- MISSOURI, Marion County, Palmyra, Speigle House, 406 S. Dickerson (02/14/85)
MISSOURI, St. Louis County, Ladue, Price School, Price School Lane (02/14/85)
- NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS, Rota Island, Songsong vicinity, Dugi Archeological Site, E of Songsong (02/11/85)